

Requests concerning the official approval of the history and civics text book

which distort of history and revive the imperial historical view

According to the Asahi Shinbun dated Feb.21,2001, it is highly probable that this March, a junior high school history textbook compiled by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, will pass the Ministry of Education's screening process after some amendments are made. The president of the society is Kanji Nishio, Professor of Denki-Tsushin University. Criticizing the current school history textbooks for presenting a "masochistic" view of history, the Society was established in 1997, for the purpose of promoting the spread of history textbooks based on the imperial historical view.

At the time of an earlier application for screening in April, 2000, the textbook not only glossed over and justified the Pacific War as "the Great East Asian War" with the purpose of liberating Asia, but also insisted that the annexation of Korea "was done legitimately" being "supported by the Allies as the policy for the stabilization of the Far East," to justify Japan's colonization of other Asian countries. It is impossible to trace the historical origin of the name of the state as "Nihon" and that of the title "Tenno" beyond the middle of the seventh century; yet, the textbook emphasizes the centralization of the Emperor as the national consciousness asserting that the establishment of the state as "Nihon" has its foundation in the *Kiki's* myth of the emperor Jimmu and others. Not with any precise knowledge because of the secrecy of the process of the screening, however, we also hear that there are a lot of makeshift descriptions in other social studies texts which are in the process of screening. Some examples of the descriptions include the elimination of the reference to the Japanese government's participation in the systematic victimization of "comfort women"--the euphemism for women forced to provide sex for Japanese soldiers in wartime--, the cutting of much of the description of the imperial military's assaults, and the renaming of " the Nanking Massacre" as " the Nanking Incident."

The imperial historical view expressed in the school textbook with the distortion of history is the ideology of the State of the Imperial System, which has realized its purposes in the following statements and movements : the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Norota Yoshinari's recent statement of " The Great East Asian War," Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro's statement that "Japan is the gods" kingdom having the Emperor as its center," the former Speaker of the House of Representatives. Sakurachi Yoshio's statement that "there is something good about the Imperial Rescript on Education," the establishment of National Foundation Day (1966) , the repeated attempts at nationalization of Yasukuni shrine(1969-74), the national budget and expenditure for the Emperor's accession and the Daijyosai (1990), the legislation of Gengo (1979), the legislation and compulsory administration of "Hinomaru and Kimigayo" as the national flag and the national anthem respectively, and the ongoing attempts at changing the Fundamental Law of Education for

the worse.

As a reaction to the globalization and the pluralization of values, the bigoted imperial nationalism and the reactionarism to restore the Emperor system of Japan has had several effects. From an international standpoint, it makes an attempt to justify Japan's aggressive war but also does harm to the current and future dialogue with other countries in Asia. From a domestic standpoint, it not only fosters a discriminative society by the unific intolerance of diversity of the Tenno System but also neglects the principle of the separation of religion from politics, which causes the deprivation of citizens of their "freedom of religion" and "freedom of thought and consciousness." It is a poor memory of history and complacent "bluffing" that are "masochistic" enough to weaken the credibility of Japan in the international community.

Aiming at realizing the dignity of "life" and justice and peace as universal principles, we, religious people, confess the responsibility for our crimes that we failed to fight against nationalism of the Tenno system resulting in participation in an aggressive war. We determine not only to resist any attempts to treat an Emperor or the state of Japan as the ultimate lord but also to continue teaching the true "history" at church from generation to generation. Bearing all these in mind, we make two requests as follows:

1) Feigning formal neutrality that "the state is not in a position to certify any specific historical knowledge or historical facts, " the Ministry of Education is about to approve the Society's textbook. Such approval is deception, disregard for the agony of those who suffered damage because of Japan's war of aggression toward other Asian countries, and indeed, distortion of historical facts. Therefore, we request that you not approve the textbook.

2) To assume responsibility for the aggressive war to make compensation for the damage is not "masochistic" at all, but a most positive action, indispensable in establishing reconciliation and peace with other Asian countries. For historical education, "a point of view" is crucial. We request that you be aware of the responsibility of our state for teaching history based on a deep reflection on Japan's war of aggression toward other Asian countries.

To Mr. Yasuo Fukuda
The Director of Cabinet Secretariat

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Japan Baptist Convention
Standing Committee, JBC Excecutive Meeting